



First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Carlsbad Caverns National Park

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: CAVE

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

Carlsbad Caverns National Park will drastically reduce threats to the park's primary resource - the Cavern - by eliminating surface developments that currently exist right over the cave. The park proposes a twofold approach. The first is to purchase the nearby White's City Resort located just at the entry to the park. The proposal includes the sale of 355 acres of land, 460 acre-feet of water rights, as well as a gift shop, grocery store, three motels, warehouse, laundromat, service station, multiple residences and campground. An infiltration study initiated by the park's 1996 GMP found that surface contaminants are making their way into the cave. This contamination is most likely due to runoff from the parking lots that are directly above the cave; however, there is also a risk of the cave being contaminated from other park operations including the maintenance operation and housing. The purchase of White's City would provide an opportunity to stage parking areas, a transportation system to shuttle visitors to and from the cave, park housing, and a consolidation of park administrative staff that currently work in the city of Carlsbad. There is the potential for an interagency visitor center to provide "one-stop shopping" to west Texas and southeastern New Mexico visitors. The current visitor center and elevator operation would remain in place until such time as it might be possible to remove these as well.

The second is to conduct engineering studies to determine the feasibility of bringing sewage and utility lines out of the cave via the side of the Capitan Reef rather than pumping up and out of the cave over 800 feet. The current system poses huge challenges and expenses that threaten the resource. This study would also address the potential for eventually bringing in people through this entry, thus eliminating the need for elevators as well as providing state of the art technology to reduce the amount of contaminants that currently enter the cave via the elevator shaft area.

The 46,766 acre park preserves Carlsbad Cavern and over 100 other caves within the Capitan Reef. Seventy percent of the park is designated wilderness. Carlsbad Caverns National Park was designated a World Heritage Site in 1995 - a testament to its outstanding international significance. The eventual elimination of surface developments over this world class resource must be a long-term goal to protect these irreplaceable resources.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

John C. Benjamin

Site: CAVE

STEWARDSHIP

☒ Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

☒ Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.

Conduct an engineering/feasibility study to determine the viability of bringing sewage and other utilities out of the side of the Capitan Reef as well as the eventual use of the route to bring visitors into the Cavern.

☐ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS